



ARANYA

HYDERABAD BIRDING PALS | FRIENDS OF FLORA & FAUNA



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In this issue

In the month of March, we conducted four bird walks. Trip reports of those you'll read in this issue. The onset of summer is a trigger for many resident birds to start their breeding activities. Courtship displays are a vital part of it and it is discussed in the cover story. To help you with choosing a travel charger for your camera battery, we've a writeup on it. Yet another HBP photographer will reveal what's in his camera bag. A travelogue of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh trip by HBP members is included.

Go through this issue and do tell us your valuable feedback.

Happy Birding
Ajinkya Supekar

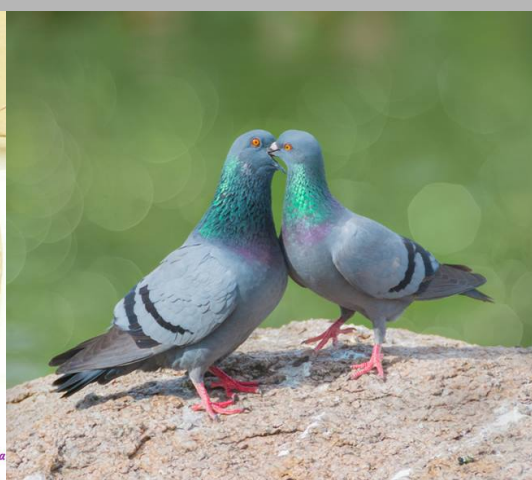
Hyderabad Birding Pals (HBP) is a group of bird watching enthusiasts based out of Hyderabad, united by a common love for birds. We organize free bird walks around the city of Hyderabad that are open to participation by all like-minded individuals. We are an informal group, who are passionate about bird watching and photography, learning about bird behavior (in the field) and doing our bit towards conservation of nature and its habitat as well. Do check our Facebook group to stay up to date on our bird watching events.



ARANYA

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March Bird Walks



**196th Bird Walk | Narsapur Forest
4th March 2018**

**197th Bird Walk | Ameenpur Lake
11th March 2018**



March Bird Walks

198th Bird Walk | Osman Sagar 18th March 2018



199th Bird Walk | Uma Maheshwaram 25th March 2018



Narsapur Forest Trip Report

By Raghu Nathan

196th Bird Walk at Narsapur Forest
04th March 2018

The Narsapur forest range is located in Medak district, 50 Kms north of Hyderabad, Telangana. It is primarily a dry deciduous forest spread across 40 square kilometers and is home to a variety of flora and fauna. Narsapur lake is situated at the edge of the forest making it a perfect spot for migratory birds and waders apart from other avifauna. Based on e-Bird data, around 220 species have been recorded in the area so far.

A group of 8 birders gathered near the Air Force Academy, Dundigal, all geared up to explore the area approximately 3 kms prior to Narsapur lake. The path led us through the forest making it very pleasant trail with troops of Rhesus macaques getting ready for their morning breakfast.



Painted Spurfowl *Galloperdix lunulata*
By Sourav Das

We reached the birding location around 7 am and as we began we were welcomed by Rosy starlings, Brahminy Starlings, Plum headed Parakeets and Rose ringed Parakeets. One could see that the forest was turning yellow with reducing green patches indicating the arrival of summer. At this stage we formed smaller groups, and each team had a different patch or section to explore. This strategy seemed to work fairly soon in the walk, Sourav Das spotted and photographed a Painted Spurfowl. This was the first record of sighting this species in the Narsapur Forest Range. Another team member Mangeshsingh Thakur photographed a Tickell's Thrush which usually lurks on the dense and cluttered forest floor. This too was a first record for Narsapur. After some time, the we were thrilled to see a Crested Hawk Eagle perched on a tree up-close this was spotted by Kalyan Ineni. The walk also gave us glimpses of the Malabar Whistling Thrush, Indian Blackbird, Jerdon's Leafbird, Black Redstart and Crested Serpent Eagle.



Crested Hawk-Eagle *Nisaetus cirrhatus*
By Sourav Das

All the teams gathered near the lake which was teeming with Indian Spot billed Duck, Lesser whistling Duck, Garganey, and Cotton Pygmy Goose. Other waterfowls seen includes Eurasian Wigeon, Comb Duck, Northern Pintail and Green winged Teals in fewer numbers. We also checked out the nearby pond for Snipe that yielded in sighting a glimpse of a Pin Tailed Snipe flying from the reeds followed by Common snipe and the Greater Painted Snipe. We also spotted both juvenile and adult Brahminy Kites that were circling the area searching for prey, also a female Marsh harrier trying its luck out nearby.



Malabar Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus horsfieldii*
By Sourav Das



Rufous-tailed Lark *Ammomanes phoenicura*
By Sourav Das

A successful morning that resulted in the group sighting 113 species of birds leaving every member with a new experience, some memories and learnings for the future. As we headed back to our vehicles post briefing it was a good close to the 196th birdwalk. I look forward to joining Team HBP on many more such birdwalks in the days to come.

Here's the eBird checklist:

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S43362250>



Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*
By Mangeshsingh Thakur

Ameenpur Trip Report

By Hari Krishna Adepu

197th Bird Walk at Ameenpur Lake
11th March 2018

Ameenpur lake is one of the largest lakes near Hyderabad and is located in Ameenpur Village. It is the first lake to be declared a Biodiversity Heritage Site in India.

Twelve of us met at Mr. Idly Dosa Restaurant, Miyapur which has been our meeting spot. After having a cup of tea, we headed to the lake to start our birding session. We parked our cars near the fencing, and started walking towards the Kingfisher pond. The moment we reached the pond, we were welcomed by a flock of Garganeys.



Long-Tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*
By Hari Adepu

Immediately after taking our group picture, we split the team into small groups and ventured into the different areas around the lake. On walking further, we spotted another flock of Garganeys, followed by Northern Pintails and Lesser Whistling ducks.



Black Bittern *Ixobrychus flavicollis*
By Fareed Mohammad

After birding near the Kingfisher Pond, we ventured further inside in a hope to find bitterns. On the way, we were greeted by the Pied Cuckoo, which were surprised to find at this time of the year. We quickly clicked a record shot of it and went ahead.

On walking ahead, we saw a couple of water ponds filled with little grebes and Clamorous Reed Warblers. We were sure we would find a yellow bittern in this area and while scanning the reeds, we saw a bird flying across the water body and, that was a Black Bittern. After getting our bird of the day, we started heading back, and spotted the Night Herons, Western Marsh Harrier and finally a Brown Crake.

Overall, it was a great birding session with a total count of 81 species.

Here's the eBird checklist:

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S43554342>

Osman Sagar Trip Report

By Mangeshsingh Thakur

198th Bird Walk at Osman Sagar
18th March 2018

Osman Sagar is a place which resembles with Himayat Sagar in terms of the overall habitat. On a predefined time, early morning, myself along with Phani and Subrata started our journey. It took some time, about 20-30 mins to reach the location. During the journey, topics of discussion were mostly on birds sightings. We reached there around 6.45 am. As always, Phani had given some background on habitat and possible sightings. There I came to know that, part of it is a private property and sadly may lose its charm in the years to come.

As we entered the area, there were farms on both the sides of the road. On our right hand side while going, there were farms with standing crops to be reaped. A very good habitat for buntings and all of us acknowledged it. On that day we observed several flocks of Scaly Breasted Munias. Leaving them behind, we parked our car near the property entrance. Phani told me that there is one more area if we enter into property. Unfortunately the watchman did not allow us inside.

There are many photos I have seen from Osman Sagar on HBP but the one which really made me crazy was of 'Oriental Skylark' sitting on a lovely perch. As I haven't seen the bird before, it was high on my wish list. Phani had told me that Oriental Skylarks are in good number here. And as expected, we saw some larks on open land both side of our trail.

Before sharing our experience with larks, we saw couple of Grey Francolins taking dust bath which later disappeared in bushes on our arrival. Some more were seen busy on ground and on some trees as

well. Phani was with binoculars (I'm yet to see him in action with camera) observing around. To our left, there were another small group of larks. On close inspection, we saw that they were Oriental Skylarks foraging on ground. I took some photographs but due to low light, they were not clear. On a closer approach they flew away to a safer distance. The place also had good numbers of Syke's larks and Paddyfield Pipits.

Here, I admit honestly; I have seen Syke's lark many times and can identify it on field easily. But on that day, after sighting Oriental Skylark, I found it difficult to differentiate the two species and thus I took multiple shots of Sykes lark assuming them to be Oriental Skylarks. But that's fine, it happens on the field and I know I'm not the first one to face such scenario.

The land was dotted with some thorny bushes and some tall trees. I saw common birds like Black Drongo, Rosy Starlings, and Large Grey Babblers on ground as well as the trees.

In a while we arrived near the lake. Phani and Subrata went to left side in search of Godwits and Redshanks. There were some flocks of ducks far in the lake. We could not figure out them as it was against the sun for us but most were Spot billed Ducks and Garganeys.

I saw some waders like Kentish plover, Lesser Sand Plover and Wood Sandpiper. Adding to the list were Glossy Ibis and some common water birds in the area. There were good activity of Warblers, Prinias around bushes. I also saw a few quails disappearing in nearby bushes.

It was only 8.30 am but by then it became too hot. So we decided to call off the day. While moving back, we saw White breasted Waterhen and heard some unknown sound from the same place. As we came back to our Bunting spot, the beautiful Peafowl female welcomed us. We preferred to watch them instead of making some shutter noise.

So this was my short experience at Osman Sagar. The place has amazing potential for birdlife. I am expecting some rare birds at this place in future. And I believe we can get some rarities in coming season with this kind of a habitat. If you are visiting to Osman Sagar in summer around March-April, it is highly recommended that you carry enough water and avoid walking in the sun.

Once again, I would like to thank HBP for giving me opportunity to visit such a beautiful places. A total of 93 species were reported.

Here's the eBird checklist:

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S43756224>



Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*
By Subrata Kool

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*
By Subrata Kool



Uma Maheshwaram Trip Report

By Balakrishna Marar

199th Bird Walk at Uma Maheshwaram
25th March 2018

Our team leader Phani Krishna Ravi had posted in the HBP group about the 199th bird walk that was to be at Uma Maheshwaram. The meeting point for us was at the ORR near Tukuguda at 4:30am.

Uma Maheshwaram is about 160 kms from where I stay in Hyderabad. We are a group of 4 who almost always travel together and take pride in calling ourselves THE 50+ Gang (Vinod, Sundar, Gyaneshwar & Me...comprise the original gang). Now that Gyanji has permanently shifted to Sholapur we got another member in the 50+ gang, none other than our very own dynamic Vincent bhai.



Puff-throated Babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps*
By Subrata Kool



Forest cover of Uma Maheshwaram

After a few stops on the highway, catching up with the rest of the group we reached the foot of the Temple just after sunrise. Enroute we spotted a Black Shouldered Kite, Grey Hornbill, Yellow eyed Babbler, few spotted doves, Red vented bulbuls, Common Babblers & then Gopal spotted a Bay backed Shrike. It was high time to pull out our gear.

As we were taking the final hairpin bend the first sighting & a lifer for me was a Barred button quail, and then it was a field day for all of us who had gathered there. A Yellow Throated Bulbul was playing on the ground, and got so close to Vincy's foot, he inspite of having his camera in hand could only stand and watch it hopping around. The best part was Phani was lying down on the tarmac with his 600mm aiming at the bird from between Vincy's legs. Next we climbed down the steps in front of the temple & we spotted White Browed Bulbul, Emerald Dove, Puff Throated Babbler, Blue Rock Thrush female and Rufous Treepie.

At this point Phani happened to sight a small greenish colored bird down in the valley on a tree in between some small branches & leaves.

He asked me take a record shot, (it took me a few seconds to focus myself). On reviewing the shot he said it looks somewhat different to the usual, hearing this I got excited and tried to take a couple of more shots, but as my luck would have it I got both the shots a bit out of focus. Later it was confirmed to be a **Golden-spectacled Warbler and a first sighting in Telangana**. Due credit to Phani Krishna Ravi a true team leader & a great birder and companion.

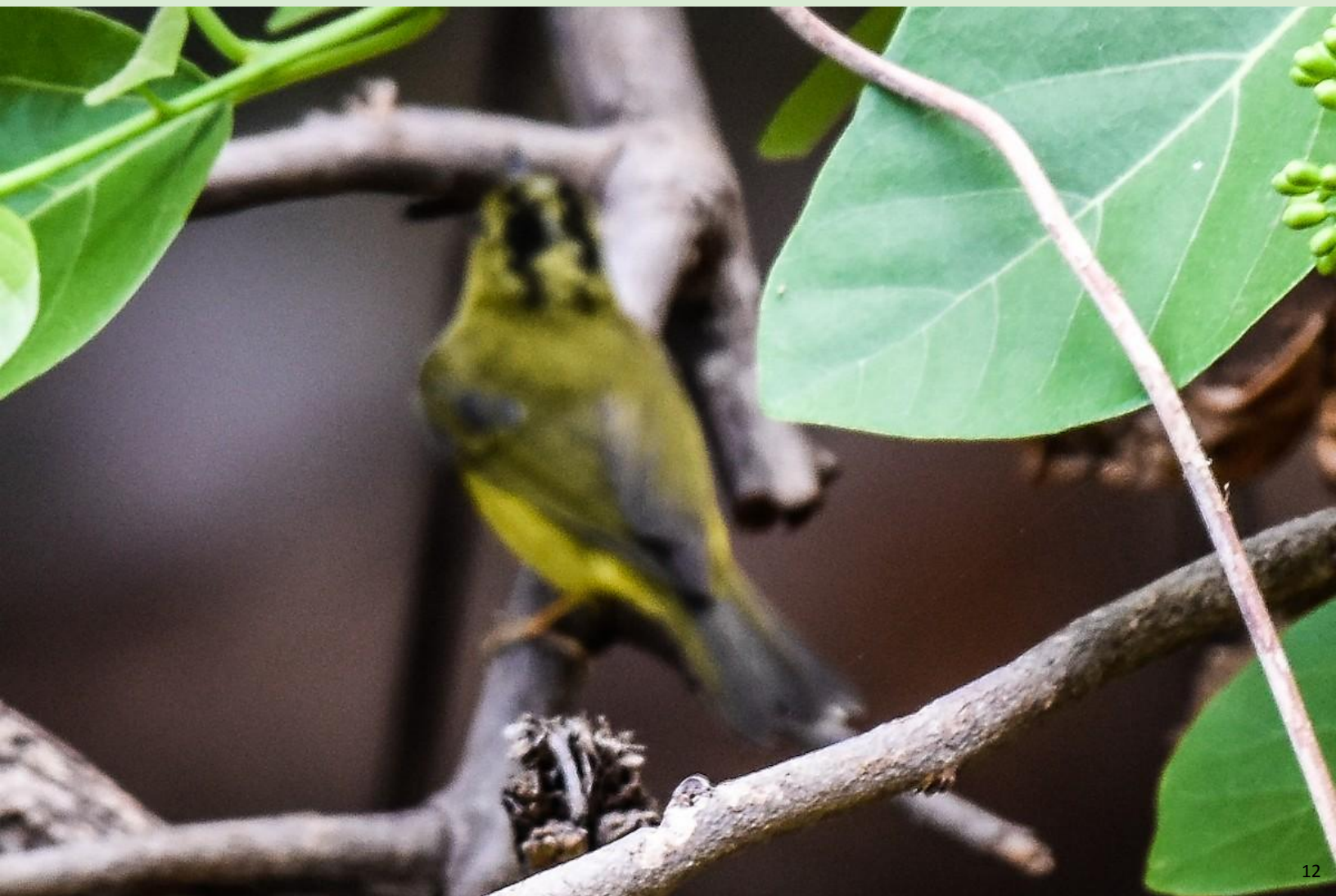
Shortly after this a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher paid us a visit. We also sighted and photographed Brown Breasted Flycatcher, Indian Scimitar Babbler, Brown headed Barbet, Black Drongo, Painted Spurfowl, Jerdon's Leafbird and it was then that I found a greyish bird with a blue head. I photographed the bird in order to show it to one of the birders for an ID, he puts his

hand around my shoulder and with a soft voice tells me it's a very rare bird, at first I thought I had hit the jackpot and found a truly unique species all by myself, until I realized it's a Black Naped Monarch female. However it was a first for me.

We then assembled together for a group photograph and we began our way down. At the temple near the foothill we sighted a White Bellied Drongo, Rose ringed Parakeet, Green Bee Eaters, white spotted Fantail, Common Iora, and a few Bay backed Shrikes. By this time we 50+ were feeling thirsty so off we went to Mannanur nearby to quench our thirst.

We then decided to call it a day. On the way back to Hyderabad got a Blue Faced Malkoha and finally an Indian Robin female which was our last shot of the day.

Golden-spectacled Warbler *Seicercus burkii*
By Balakrishna Marar





Indian Blackbird *Turdus simillimus*
By Subrata Kool

We did see plenty more but as they were not documented by me I have not mentioned them here. To sum it up we all had a super day of birding on the 199th bird walk with HBP that resulted in a first sighting for Telangana, that of the Golden-spectacled Warbler. A total of 93 species were reported.

Here's the eBird checklist:

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S43934376>



Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*
By Abhishek Ravindra

White-browed Bulbul *Pycnonotus luteolus*
By Abhishek Ravindra



Courtship Behaviour of Resident Birds

By Ajinkya Supekar

As the summer has set in, it is time for birds to procreate. While the winter migrants have said goodbye, we now see resident birds starting their breeding activities. Most bird species choose this season to breed as they can raise their young most effectively. It corresponds to maximum availability of food. This season has an abundance of blooming flowers, ripening seeds and fruits and plenty of insects. Some birds like rock pigeons breed throughout the year as they can adapt well to changing conditions. For some birds arrival of rainfall is a trigger and insufficient rainfall leads to diminished breeding success or altogether abandoning of reproductive activities (e.g., Painted Storks).

To bag a chance to mate, males need to impress females. Therefore they need to coax the females with the help of auditory and visual displays called as courtship displays. It is a fascinating behaviour to witness. This courtship behaviour can be of different types- Singing, Plumage displays, Dancing, Preening, Imitating, Nest building or several together.

Apart from their purpose to woo partners, courtship displays are used to make sure birds choose compatible mates and reduce territorial aggression. It is a show of strength, health, mating desirability and intelligence. It helps to choose the best partner so as to ensure healthy offsprings.

Let's explore various courtship displays of our resident birds...



Pairs in search of a place to nest
By Sriram Reddy

The feather display of Peacock



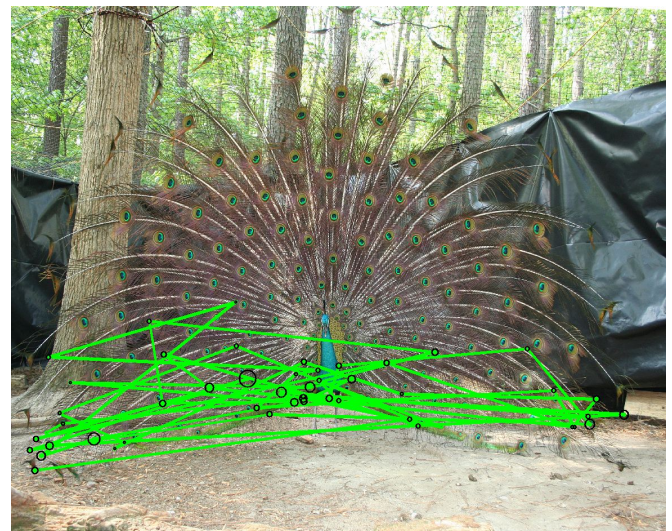
Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* pair
By Rahul Rallan

“The ‘dance’ of the peacock consists of erecting and fully fanning out the tail feathers (called train) which is arched forward. The half-open chestnut wings go through continuous shaking and shivering. In this posture, he faces the hen. From time to time he shakes the feathers vigorously producing a 'zizzing' sound. The hen usually appears completely unconcerned during all these amorous antics, but she occasionally responds with an inferior imitation of the male's movements.”

Peacocks gather in groups called "parties," and females seem to choose mates based on their appearance as well as their strutting and vocal abilities.

Although the peacock is in all its grandeur with tall tail feathers and colorful eyespots, experts say the peahens look at the lowest edge of tail feathers and aren't paying much attention to the rest of the five-foot tall displays.

The peacock's legs, lower feathers and dance attract most attention during courtship.



This image shows the tracks of a peahen's gaze as a peacock makes a courtship display. Purdue researcher Jessica Yorzinski uses eye-tracking technology to study avian behavior. (Photo courtesy of Jessica Yorzinski)
Read more [here](#)



Communal Display of House Sparrows

Three males and a female House sparrows,
Source: Wikimedia Commons

“House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* have a communal display consisting around three to four males courting a single female. The males prance around the female with puffed feathers, drooping wings and cocked tails. The female now and again making sudden chase at them occasionally plucking out a feather.” Video [here](#)

The display starts when a male tries to approach a female and she flies away. This results in a chase and it attracts other males and the courtship behaviour ensues.



House Sparrows by Sriram Reddy

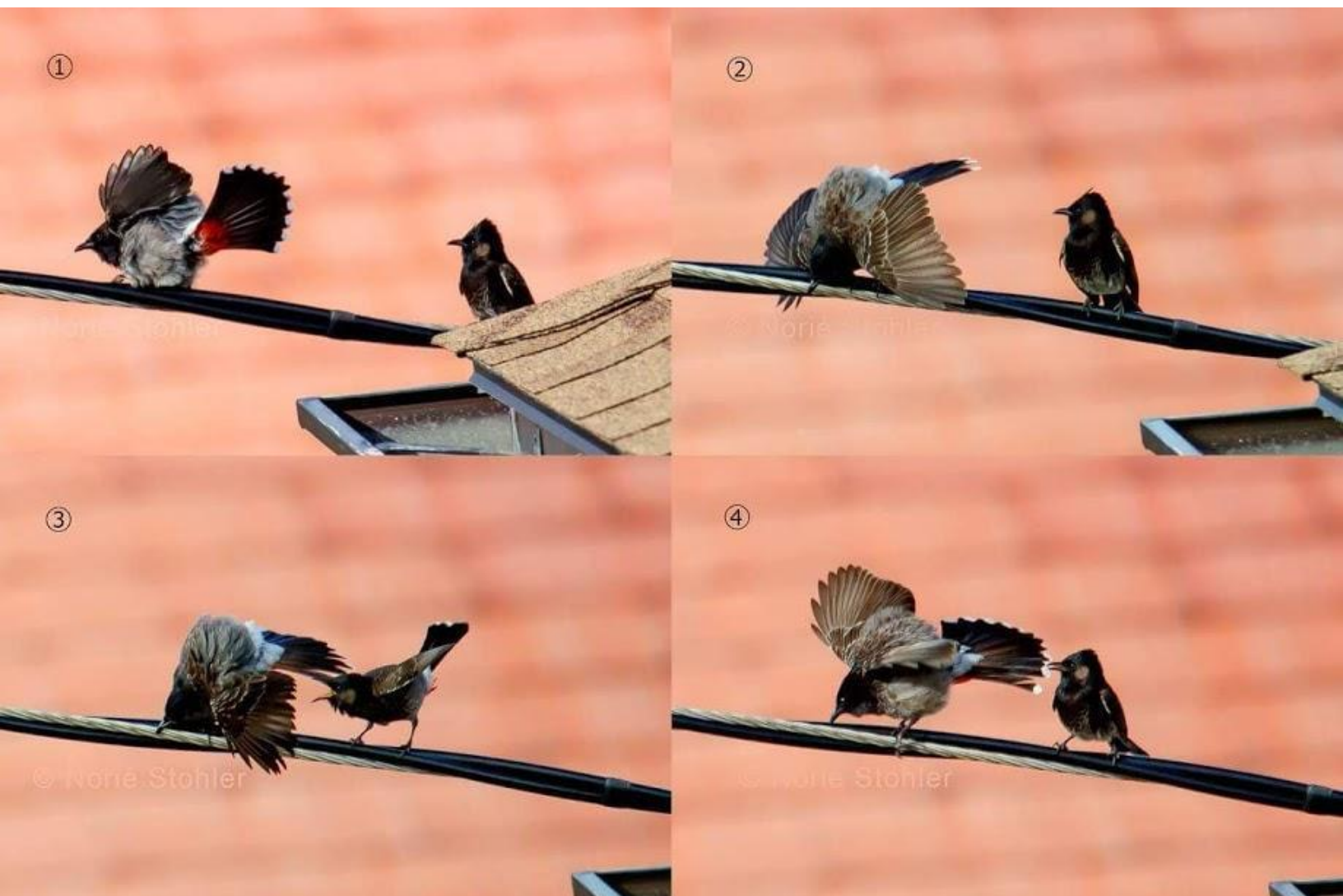
Visual display of Red vented Bulbul

“The male spreads out his wings above his head and slowly flutters them up and down while the tail is spread out and at the same time depressed. The crimson under tail coverts are made to stand out laterally, pointing down and backward.” (Ali & Ripley 1987)

The below image sequence clicked by **Norie Stohler** shows the courtship effort by the male. Unfortunately, after the fourth image, the female decided to fly away.



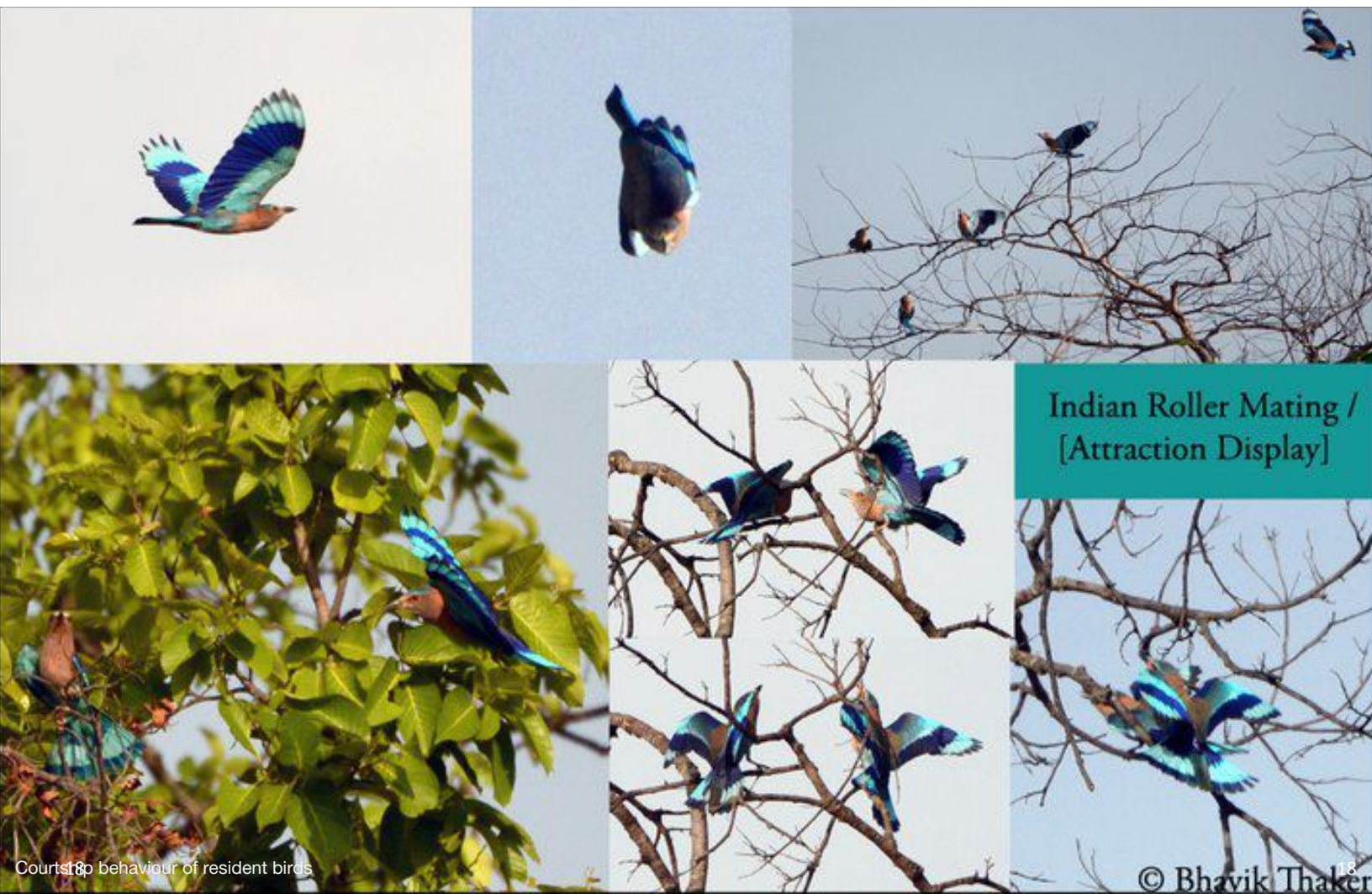
Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* courting pair
Source: Wikimedia Commons



The noisy roll of Indian Roller

“The Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis* has a very noisy and spectacular display during the breeding season, sometimes both birds of a pair participating. The bird rockets up in the air vertically, flaps about erratically in steep wave-crests and performs a series of fantastic evolutions - tumbling, somersaulting, nose-diving, looping the loop and rolling from side to side to the accompaniment of loud raucous screams, its brilliant plumage flashing in the sun. These extravagant antics and playful dives sometimes directed at quietly perched female, at other times apparently in self-exhilaration.” (Ali & Ripley 1987)

The following collage made by **Bhavik Thaker** shows the typical courtship display of Indian Roller leading to copulation.



Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis*

“During the breeding season male indulges in much ludicrous puffing out of chest, bill pointed stiffly skyward, and strutting and posturing in front of rivals; this accompanied by upward jerks of the fanned tail, cocked well over back till almost touching head. He becomes very pugnacious and vigorously defends his territory. Stoops diagonally down at intruder whether rival male or prospecting female, wings held open in a wide V above back and legs dangling-very like shrike pouncing on prey (see in below photo). At the end of a swoop shortly before alighting often fluffs out his plumage into a ball and almost floats down with a hovering wing-action. After chasing off the intruder the victor flies back to his own territory performing a 'victory roll', with body stiffly at an upward angle, head held high, and slow, deliberate wing-flaps.” (Ali & Ripley 1987)



Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis* male
By Dasari Vijay

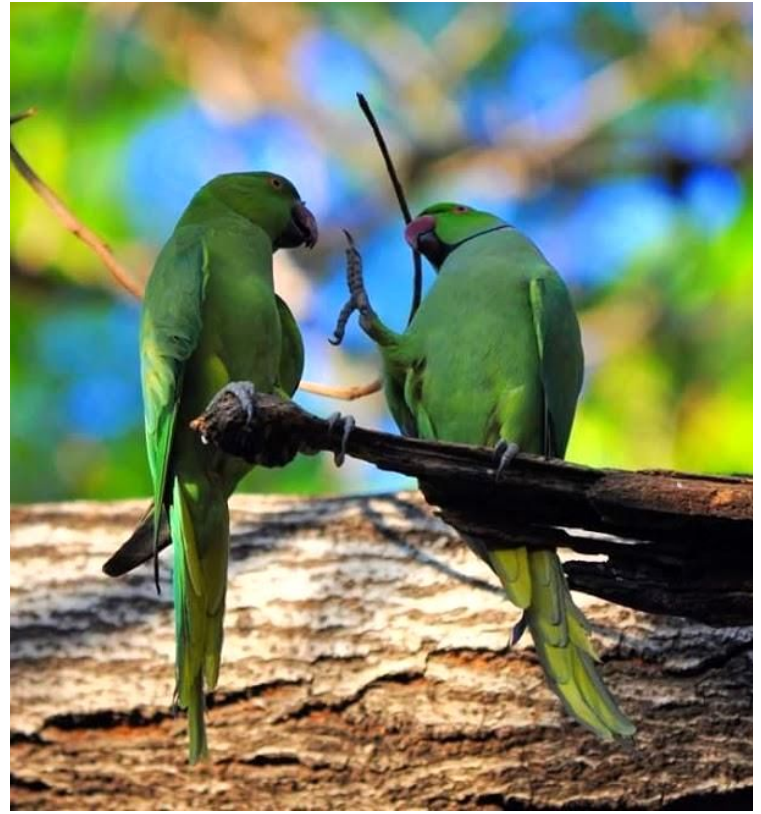
Male Oriental Magpie-Robin courting a female
By Vinod Goel



Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

“The male has a very ludicrous courtship display, sidling up to his mate, stretching himself up to his full height, feeding her on regurgitated pap and caressing her, often with the bills interlocked. He suddenly backs away stiffly, eying her from a foot's distance with his head pulled well back (as if in rapt admiration), strutting and posturing, wings partially open at the shoulders, and the foot on her side lifted and ridiculously 'clawing the air' towards her. He then crosses over to the other side of the hen to repeat the antics, and thus back and forth several times.” (Ali & Ripley 1987)

Courtship video [here](#)



‘Clawing the air’ courtship by a male Rose-ringed Parakeet
By Anup Chavda



Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* pair
By Dasari Vijay

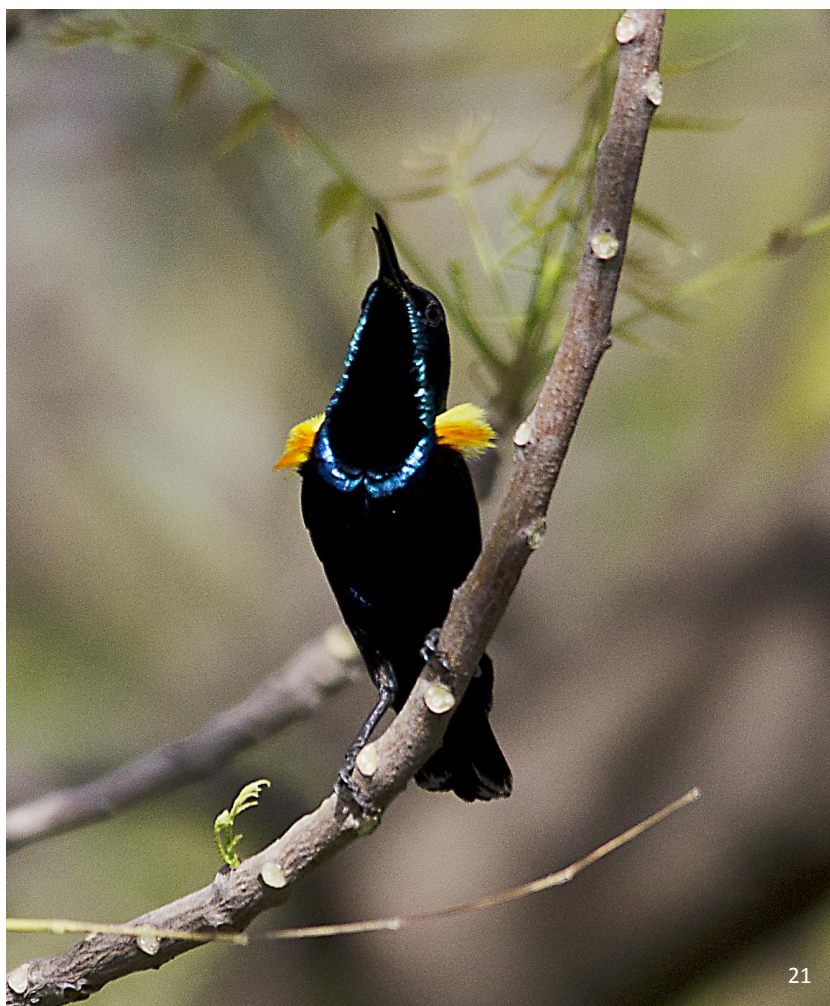
Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus*



Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus*
By Vincent Vinay Kumar

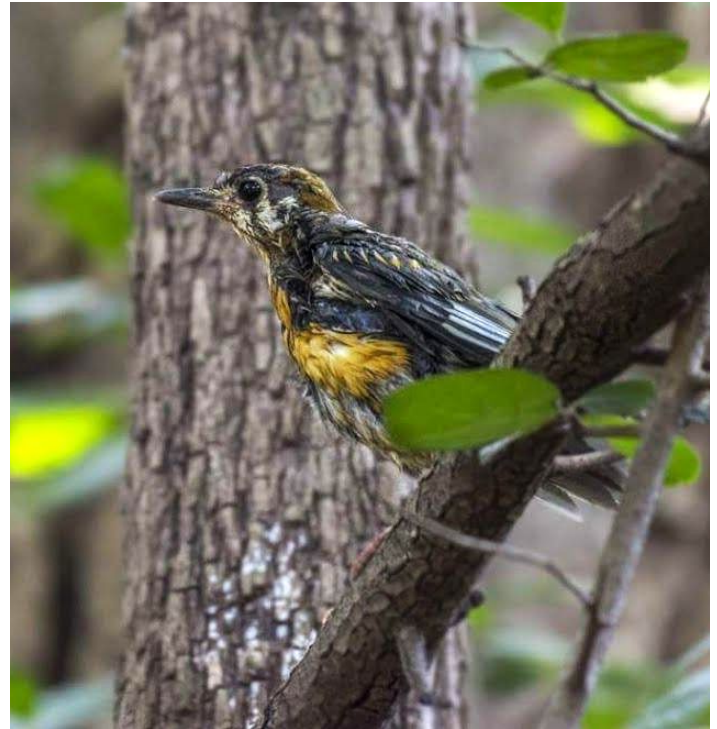
“The male, with slightly raised head and perched in front of the female, flutters his partially opened wings to display the pectoral tufts, singing the while. Also displays by hovering vertically in the air, his wings beating so rapidly as to show only as a blur, while the pectoral plumes stand out in front of them like a blaze. For a few seconds this attitude is maintained, then with a flick of his wings he is away, only to return in a few moments and repeat the performance” (Ali & Ripley 1987)

Purple Sunbird male
displaying its pectoral tufts
By Praveen Rao Koli



Orange-headed Thrush *Geokichla citrina*

“Male stands very erect and rigid on a bough beside its mate, with head bent stiffly and tucked into the breast feathers as it sings vigorously’. ‘Male sat on branch motionless like a stuffed dummy, head bowed double till bill-tip almost touching his feet, wings loosely drooped at sides, back arched and tail depressed. Uttered snatches of normal song in soft undertone (almost sub-song), only the tips of his mandibles moving. Female sat about 40 cm away, passive but alert, changing her position abruptly now and again from facing her suitor to a sudden about turn, but entirely silent throughout the serenade. These proceedings, timed for over 15 minutes, were in progress when the observation started and may have continued longer if the birds had not been disturbed’” (Ali & Ripley 1987)



Orange-headed Thrush Juvenile
By Fareed Mohmed



Male Orange Headed Thrush (on right) courting a female
By Shardul Kelkar

Sirkeer Malkoha *Taccocua leschenaultii*

“Courtship display consists of a ludicrous repeated bowing (or bobbing) by one bird of a pair (in one case verified as female) before the other, with its plumage fluffed out and tail cocked and expanded like a rounded fan, the white tips of the rectrices showing up as a conspicuous band. At other times both birds partake in these antics with equal enthusiasm, puffing out their plumage, fanning and erecting the tails, and repeatedly bowing low.” (Ali & Ripley 1987)

Courtship Display of Sirkeer Malkoha
By Aditya Roy



Sirkeer Malkoha *Taccocua leschenaultii*
By Ashis Kumar Pradhan



Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*

“The male fusses around and about his seemingly uninterested mate, stopping still at frequent intervals to fluff out the white rump-feathers, cock his tail, droop his wings and raise his head skywards in a stately posture -a picturesque flaunting of black, white and gold. Each time the head is raised the throat swells and gives vent to a very faint but clear, sweet and musical whistle, or a long-drawn sibilant cheee.

The scene changes suddenly, and in a paroxysm of excitement, he flits from branch to branch to the accompaniment of a loud twittering and fluttering of wings, to spring perpendicularly into the air a metre or two, hovering, fluffing out and parachuting down like a ball of feathers on to some nearby perch (video [here](#)). The same spectacular antic is repeated again and again.” (Ali & Ripley 1987)

Courtship display of Common Iora
By Jyoti Ahlawat



Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda*

“Particularly noisy in courtship. The pair will sit side by side a few centimetres apart, half turning and bobbing ludicrously at each other like mechanical toys, craning their necks till the bills almost touch and uttering strange musical croaks and chuckles.” (Ali & Ripley 1987)

Juvenile Rufous Treepies
By Tina Mohan Kumar



Courting Rufous Treepie Pair
By Santanu Majumder



Great Egret *Ardea alba*

Territorial Great Egret males display predominantly in the morning and evening hours. Longer period of stay at the roosting place coupled with vigorous defense of a territory by male Great Egrets are first signs of impending nesting activity.

Males advertise by having an erect stance and forward displays. The scapular plumes are erected and fanned. It commonly sways its body from side to side. Wing-stroke, Stretch display, Bow display and Snap display are features of this behaviour.

Read more [here](#)

Video of stretch display [here](#)



Displaying Great Egret *Ardea alba*
By Manjula Desai



Great Egret *Ardea alba* Pair
By Manjula Desai

White-browed Wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis*

“The male of a pair flies down to ground on hovering wings, singing lustily, his plumage fluffed out flaunting the contrasting colours. Lands in front of female, raises open both wings vertically back to back with only the tips quivering and breast-feathers fully puffed. Approaches female thus, with stiff mincing steps. She responds by a slight crouch and opening out of wings at the armpits, shivering them as in food-begging.” (Ali & Ripley 1987)

Do see the courtship video [here](#)



White-browed Wagtail Pair
By Naveen Vishwanath



Rock Pigeons *Columba livia*
By Vincent Vinay Kumar

Gray-headed Swamphe *Porphyrio poliocephalus*

“The male performs an elaborate though ludicrous courtship display, holding up water-weeds in his bill, facing the female and bowing and showing off before her to the accompaniment of loud chuckles” (Ali & Ripley 1987)

Gray-headed Swamphe
By Kartic Swaminath



Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*

“A deep gootr-goo, gootr-goo, etc. littered by the male with head bowed and throat puffed out while he turns round and round on his own axis in courtship or aggressive display.” (Ali & Ripley 1987)

The quoted text in the description is taken from Handbook of the birds of Indian and Pakistan by Salim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley. Though it is an old publication, the multivolume book has detailed information about birds.

Birds are quiet active in this season and are thus easy to spot. Care should be taken to not disturb them while observing and photographing.

Happy Birding

Further Reading

<http://www.natgeotraveller.in/learn-the-art-of-courtship-from-10-indian-birds/>

<http://www.oiseaux-birds.com/article-birds-courtship-displays.html>

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/why-do-birds-have-such-elaborate-and-varied-courtship-rituals/>

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Courting Coppersmith Barbets
By Venugopal



A Week in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh

By Bhaarat Vyas

Greetings to HBP Members!!!

First of all I was very much excited for all an all birding tour with two senior members of our group i.e. Akal Singh and Ashis Kumar Pradhan. This was my 1st birding tour with the HBP members. We started separately from Hyderabad on 27th March 2018 and assembled at Guwahati. The tour was already planned by Ashis; a cab was booked from Guwahati Airport to Prashanti Lodge, Bhalukpong, Arunachal Pradesh. The burbling of the Kameng River near this lodge was the music of silence for us at dawn and dusk. The initial itinerary was to explore Nameri National Park, the top second hotspot for birding in Assam, and Sessa in Arunachal Pradesh for first four days and later Kaziranga National Park for next three days.

27th March 2018- 1st Day

We reached Bhalukpong from Guwahati, which is around 250 km and almost 5 hrs. of journey. As Ashis was with us he started the birding as soon as we came out from Guwahati airport itself.

The condition was little wet and rain just stopped. While on road we saw a good

number of Lesser Adjutants and while crossing the massive Brahmaputra River we found one raptor with a catch. Ashis pulled the binocular and identified as Osprey; it was like delighted moment for all of us; as trip started with absolutely stunning note. The Osprey was flying parallel with us about a kilometer and half and later we decided to pull our cameras for the flying shot but it went – off into the river. So, Ashis said – this was just a beginning we will get many lifers.

On the way to Bhalukpong we met our guide Papu Choudhury at Tezpur; we had our snacks in between and again started our journey towards Bhalukpong. We reached Bhalukpong late evening and done the birding on the way itself.

Bhalukpong is a small town in West Kameng district in Arunachal Pradesh. The town is located 213m above sea level. Bhalukpong was governed by local tribal Aka rulers, with occasional political dominance from Bhutan and Assam. Fish angling and river rafting are the principal tourist activities in Bhalukpong.

28th March 2018 – 2nd Day :

We went to Nameri Wildlife Sanctuary which is around 25 km away from the stay. We had to cross the small river Jia Bharali in the boat to get into the forest and taking due permission from the forest department. We were hoping to see White-winged wood duck which is the state bird of Assam. While walking on the track Papu showed us many lifers like – Maroon Oriole, Barred – cuckoo dove, Wedge-tailed pigeon, Green Imperial Pigeon, Mountain Imperial Pigeon, Large Hawk-Cuckoo, Pin-striped tit-Babbler and we reached the place where we can find the ducks but the day was not favouring us but all of a sudden three Jerdon's Baza arrived and Akal pointed out – look at that Raptor. One flew-off but another pair sat on an open perch and we were delighted as it was difficult to sight. We had good pictures of Jerdon's Baza. Later while returning we found River Lapwing and Great Thick-Knee.



Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni*
By Ashis Kumar Pradhan

So, our morning session went well though we didn't sight White-winged wood – duck but we were satisfied with the morning sightings.

In the evening we explored the outskirts of Bhalukpong where-in we got one more lifer- Striated Grassbird and later we thought to visit again the Nameri forest route; as we had heard of Wreathed Hornbill sighting in flocks at late evening and we got to see the glimpses far – off and a flock flew – off around 20 plus; so that was again a lifer for us. We ended the day with a good note.

Another day we planned to go to Sessa but Ashis had some other plan in his mind; he decided to visit Pakke Tiger Reserve for sighting Blyth's Kingfisher, which was not at all into our itinerary.



Striated Grassbird *Megalurus palustris*
By Ashis Kumar Pradhan

29th March 2018 – 3rd Day

We started early from Bhalukpong to Pakke which was around three and half hours journey. On the way to Pakke, we saw many species like Grey Shrike, Asian Barred Owlet, Daurian Redstart Female etc.

We need to take the permission to enter the Pakke Wildlife Sanctuary and even we need to take the vehicle from there itself. It was bit difficult to book the vehicle on-sight but after lot of difficulty we booked the vehicle to go inside Pakke Wildlife Sanctuary. Vehicle came late and we started our journey to search one of the rarest kingfishers of India, the Blyth's Kingfisher. We covered almost 5 km. to see Blyth's Kingfisher in vehicle and later it was **"On the rock"** please don't misunderstand us; it was a stream with lots of pebbles covered with green algae, a condition very difficult to walk and very easy to slip. But as the thrust to see the most wonderful bird never ended; we had to walk in the stream of small and large pebble upto 3 to 5 km. for sighting Blyth's Kingfisher. While walking in the stream and **"On the rock"** we have sighted many species like – Ashy Bulbuls, Plumbeous Water Redstart, White-capped Redstart, Common Kingfisher, Blue-winged Minla, Black-backed Forktail and finally the Blyth's Kingfisher; it was like a dream come true for all us.

As after so many efforts we reached the point and later it dived in front of us to catch the shrimp, we just say **"WOW"** and we got the snaps with the morning breakfast and it flew away. Later we decided to go further inside the stream to sight few more birds as well as Blyth's Kingfisher again. We were lucky to spot Green-Billed Malkoha and while returning we again sighted Blyth's Kingfisher closely and got very good snaps for the records.



Blyth's Kingfisher *Alcedo hercules*
By Akal Singh

After completing the Pakke we thought of going to Sessa for some birding but due to entry restriction we couldn't go inside and we did birding on road and we sighted Silver-eared Mesia, Grey-headed Warbler, Lesser racket-tailed Drongo, Long-tailed Sibia, Verditer Flycatcher, Grey-throated Babbler etc.



Long-tailed Sibia *Heterophasia picaoides*
By Ashis Kumar Pradhan

30th March 2018 – 4th Day

As we missed the opportunity to go to Sessa due to road construction work and entry and exit timings was at 0900 hrs. and after 1700 hrs only. It was near to Bhalukpong so we reached early as we may get 1st chance to enter to Sessa. Meanwhile we enjoyed the all Gujarati breakfast on road.

As soon as they gave clearance, all the vehicles went in. We stopped at one place wherein the vehicle can be parked, while walking alongside the road we found – Plumbeous water Redstart, white-capped water redstart, Blue whistling Thrush, Small Niltava, Yellow-bellied Warblers and White-hooded Babblers etc. and we went to one hill-top to check the activity and it was excellent. But all of a sudden it was cloudy and started raining heavily. Really difficult for us to cover our expensive gears, but somehow we all managed and taken the shelter in one of the small bamboo hut.



Beautiful Nuthatch *Sitta formosa*
By Bhaarat Vyas

Rain was very heavy and birding was not at all possible so we thought of enjoying the rain along with some local cuisine.

We were very delighted to see the hospitality of small café shop also enjoyed special tea. We have also shared the candies and peppermints with the owner and they were also very happy. They were also teasing us that – “**ab chiriya kaise dekh paoge**”. The owner also started explaining us about the birds and sighting and they want to become the bird guide too.

Still the rain didn't stop and after finishing the lunch we were just taking a car ride as we cannot go out before 1700 hrs. and hoping rain to stop. Finally, rain stopped and we have started our activity and birds are coming out after good shower so photography was not possible but so we were just observing the species and trying to have the record shots like – Golden-throated Barbet, Long-tailed Broadbill, White-Naped Yuhina etc. Again rain started and we had to take the shelter in the car as we parked the car nearby only.

Again rain stopped and we started our activity along with birds and we were observing all the trees and all of a sudden we found Chestnut-bellied, white-tailed and Beautiful Nuthatches including Rufous-Backed Sibia on single tree. It was like dream come true for all of us as it is very difficult to sight.

So the day ended with a very good note and sighted many uncommon species on the day.

31st March 2018 – 5th Day

As we need to say good-bye to Bhalukpong and need to check-in Kaziranga in Assam. So we decided go via Nameri in the morning as White-winged wood-duck was yet to be seen. We had a good sighting of Osprey and later we entered the forest and try to check the place of ducks but unfortunately we couldn't see; our guide said – it just flew-off. We got disappointed and again weather played a spoiled sport. It started raining very heavily and we need to shelter beneath one tree and with all our gears covered in the jacket or tee's. When we were returning we had a surprise waiting in the form of Green Cochoa – Male with a very nice and open perch. We had good snaps of the species and later sighted Green-billed Malkoha again in open perch.



Green Cochoa *Cochia viridis*
By Bhaarat Vyas

We needed to reach Kaziranga for the evening safari so we rushed from Nameri to Kaziranga and we had our lunch and

check-out Western Range of Kaziranga National Park (Assam): Kaziranga is situated in the heart of Assam covering an area of 430 sq-kms. It is inhabited by world's largest population of **Indian rhinoceroses** aka One Horned Rhinoceroses, as well as many mammals, including tigers, elephants, panthers, bears and many birds. In 1985, it was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO for its unique natural environment. One can enjoy Elephant rides, Jeep Safaris, hikes, visit a Tea Garden and experience the cultural vista as well. Rhinoceros is also one of the genera in this family. Most rhinoceros live to be about 50 years or more. A male rhinoceros is called a **Bull**, a female a **Cow**, and the young a **Calf**; a group of rhinoceros is called a "**Crash**".

As soon as we enter the range we got to see the Pallas's Fish Eagle and later as we enter the forest we were very excited to see One Horned Rhino also sighted Chestnut Capped Babbler, Striated Babbler, Blossom-headed Parakeet and many more, even in one of the incidence a Rhino alongwith calf started running towards our jeep; which was little scary. After finishing the safari when we were going to our home-stay we saw Spot-bellied Eagle Owl an excellent lifer for us.



Indian Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis*
By Bhaarat Vyas

01st April 2018– 6th Day

We have planned to explore in the morning Central Range and evening Eastern Range. In Central Range we found few lifers like Yellow Weaver, Himalayan Rubythroat, Slender-billed Babbler and many more species. In the evening we explored Eastern Range wherein we could see Lesser & Greater Adjutant, Slender – billed vulture, Brown-Fish Owl, Blue-napped Pitta, Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker etc.

We also did the nocturnal birding and sighted owl and owlets too; always a lifer to me.



Finn's Weaver or Yellow Weaver
Ploceus megarhynchus
By Bhaarat Vyas

02nd April 2018 – 7th Day:

We planned to explore in the morning tea gardens and evening Central Range. In tea garden our guide's memories and heart unfolded – as he has started his birding career from this place.



Lesser Coucal *Centropus bengalensis*
By Ashis Kumar Pradhan

We found few lifers like Rufous-necked Laughingthrush, Pale-chinned Blue Flycatcher, Buff-breasted Babbler and other species.

In the evening we explored Central Range wherein we have seen many lifers like plenty of Himalayan Griffon, pair of Swamp Francolin, pair of Jungle fowl etc.

03rd April 2018 – 8th Day

Again we have planned to explore tea gardens in the morning and evening Eastern Range. We were willing to check – White-browed Piculet, Lesser Coucal, Square-tailed Drongo-cuckoo, Greater-necklaced Laughingthrush, Siberian Rubythroat and many more. In the evening we explored Central Range wherein we found many species and our penultimate day was over.

04th April 2018 – 9th Day

Time to say **“GOOD-BYE”** to Kaziranga and great mates during our return journey we explored the dump yard near Guwahati – it was full of Greater Adjutant and Black – eared Kites.

Actually Kaziranga Wildlife Sanctuary is not only famous for Rhinoceros but endemic to many wildlife animals and mammals. We found many endangered species like Barasingha (Swamp Deer), Wild Boar, last strong hold for Wild Water Buffalo, Golden Langur, Hog Deer, Smooth-coated Otters, and Hoolock Gibbon (call heard only) etc.



Greater Adjutant *Leptoptilos dubius*
By Ashis Kumar Pradhan

Trip report cannot be concluded without the saying – **“In order to see birds it is necessary to become a part of the silence and can find God in nature, in animals, in birds and the environment”**.



White-browed Piculet *Sasia ochracea*
By Bhaarat Vyas

Lesson Learnt – We need to carry the protective for valuable gears; be it rain forest or sandy roads or deserts.

“Ashis Pradhan’s statement – Bhaarat ji consider this trip as an experience and making new friends; which I really admire and appreciate”.



Akal Singh, Bhaarat Vyas, Ashis Pradhan
(From front to back)

Here are the eBird checklists:

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44025973>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44052241>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44052384>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44054564>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44054619>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44083872>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44119507>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44153892>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44144021>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44176637>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44237330>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44209464>



Chestnut-capped Babbler *Timalia pileata*
By Bhaarat Vyas

Silver-eared Mesia *Leiothrix argenteauris*
By Bhaarat Vyas



Travel Chargers for Camera Battery

By Phani Krishna Raavi

Most cameras today invariably come with an AC battery charger as part of the Original Equipment manufacturer (OEM) kit, usually they are bulky and difficult to carry. In short they offer a certain lack of portability, adaptability and compatibility with varying power sources. This is a real time situation that most photographers face when in the field, where you need a power source to charge your camera batteries.



Recently many mirrorless manufacturers like Sony etc charge their in-camera batteries with external USB power which makes them comparatively travel-friendly. It is always better to use a single type of power source for all the devices you travel like phone, tablet, laptop, Camera battery charger etc.

You can power them while you are on the move like driving in your car, waiting for a late flight, charge them when there is no good AC power source and most importantly when in the field.



I recently came across RAVPower USB chargers (RAVPower.com) for camera batteries including DSLRs. These make life less complicated and offer simplified power/cable management while you are on the move. It allows you to manage the limited number of spare batteries in a more efficient way rather than carrying too many spare batteries in your luggage, adding on to weight and bulk. Most of these USB chargers are portable compared to the OEM AC chargers and have very basic charging indicators.

Advantages

- 1) Small in size
- 2) Universal power source for all travel devices
- 3) Fewer cables
- 4) Can be charged with power banks, Multi USB plugs, laptops, tablets etc
- 5) Can charge more than one battery in a compact design

Disadvantages

- 1) They are a lot of cheaper Chinese makes/brands on the market so choose wisely.
- 2) Charging time is on the higher side.
- 3) No battery support from OEM manufacturers in case of damage.
- 4) The build quality is not as sturdy as the OEM kit



Note: Wall charger / car charger / portable charger are sold separately.

Three Ways To Power Up

Unlike standard chargers with only one recharge method, RAVPower features wall, car, and power bank recharging

What's in My Camera Bag?

Prasanna Kumar Mamidala



I am an electrical engineer by qualification and but working in IT like most of the friends of my generation. I am currently working with Deloitte. I tried random photography with film cameras during my childhood, and finally bought a DSLR few years ago and I was lucky enough to find a great mentor Mr. Saurabh Chatterjee who taught me the basics of digital photography.

And HBP took my photography to next level! I still remember the first call I made to Hari Adepu to join HBP. No looking back since then! Through HBP, I got to know about Mr. Venugopal, one of the legends in our group and he mentored me in bird photography. Then the likes of Phani Krishna Raavi and Masood Hussain's tips helped me in continuously honing my photography skills!

Style of photography

My favorite theme is "Birds in their habitat". Starting of with taking quality images of perched birds I slowly started putting in efforts to click birds in action and still a long way to go at this point.

Achievements

Won several awards/distinctions from Telangana Photography Society, Hyderabad Birding Pals, Indian Birds and CLAW groups!

My pictures are featured in various photography exhibitions.

Several of my pictures are now permanently exhibited in Deloitte offices and have been winning hearts!

Suggestions

Get as close as possible without disturbing your subject. No focal length can match your physical proximity to the subject, as Masood Hussain bhai says it!

Approach the bird in such a way that you get the best possible background, from eye level of the bird whenever possible.

Support systems (Tripod, Gimbal and Bag)

I mostly shoot handheld.

But recently got Manfrotto 3 section Aluminum tripod and Manfrotto 393 heavy duty Gimbal

I use LowePro 450 AW which can fit all my equipment!

Nikon D500 and Nikkor 200-500mm

After watching many legends in this group switching to this flagship camera, I upgraded to this camera after starting birding initially with Nikon DX D3200 and then with Nikon D610 (FX). Every aspect of Nikon D500 was a big leap in terms of technological advancement. The shooting speed went up to 10 fps, resolution to 21.5MP and most importantly the high ISO performance improved considerably.



Along with D500, Nikkor 200-500mm is an excellent and affordable lens for wildlife - both birds and mammals. Gives you the entire range of focal length to close in on the subject and to zoom out to include habitat. It is considerably sharp throughout its range of focal length. It locks focus quite quickly and accurately. Absolute value for money at the price its present price point.

Nikkor 70-200mm f2.8

Sometimes, while shooting birds and mammals from very close distance, we feel the need for smaller focal lengths. This lens 70-200 helped me few times and its f2.8 aperture helps in low light shooting as well. This lens also helps me in portrait shooting as well.



Nikkor 24-70mm f2.8

I use 24-70 for indoor photography at home or events, as well as for landscapes! This is an excellent lens with super reviews! This is an expensive lens though!!



Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea*
By Prasanna Kumar Mamidala



Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*
By Prasanna Kumar Mamidala

Black-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher *Ceyx erithaca*
By Prasanna Kumar Mamidala



Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassinus*
By Prasanna Kumar Mamidala





Monitor Lizard
By Prasanna Kumar Mamidala



Tiger *Panthera tigris*
By Prasanna Kumar Mamidala

Notable Sightings



© Sriram Reddy

Ashy Minivet (*Pericrocotus divaricatus*)
Manjeera WLS, Telangana

Notable Sightings



Yellow-throated Bulbul (*Pycnonotus xantholaemus*)

© Phani Krishna Raavi

Uma Maheshwaram, Telangana

Notable Sightings



Fareed Mohamed

Long-billed Sunbird (*Cinnyris lotenius*)

© Fareed Mohamed

Uma Maheshwaram, Telangana

Photographer's Corner



Asian Brown Flycatcher (*Muscicapa latirostris*)
ATR, Telangana

© Phani Krishna Raavi

Photographer's Corner



Black and Orange flycatcher (*Ficedula nigrorufa*)
Coonoor, Tamil Nadu

© Husein Latif

Photographer's Corner



Great Barbet (*Megalaima virens*)
Sattal, Uttarakhand

© Mathew Joseph

Photographer's Corner



Slaty Headed Parakeet (*Psittacula himalayana*)
Jim Corbett National Park, Uttarakhand

© *Krishnan Kalpat*

Photographer's Corner



Crested Kingfisher(*Megaceryle lugubris*)
Sattal, Uttarakhand

© Mathew Joseph

Photographer's Corner



Oriental white-eye (*Zosterops palpebrosus*)
Coonoor, Tamil Nadu

© Husein Latif

Photographer's Corner



Indian Nightjar (*Caprimulgus asiaticus*)
Uma Maheshwaram, Telangana

© Suman Bhattacharjee

Photographer's Corner



Brooklyn PlayBox
Photography

Crested Hawk-eagle (*Nisaetus cirrhatus*)
Uma Maheshwaram, Telangana

© Suman Bhattacharjee

Photographer's Corner

Ashwin Kadiyala



Common coot (*Fulica atra*)
Hyderabad, Telangana

© Ashwin Kadiyala

Photographer's Corner



Brown Shrike (*Lanius cristatus*)
Manjeera, Telangana

© Sriram Reddy

Photographer's Corner



Velvet-fronted nuthatch (*Sitta frontalis*)
Ganeshgudi, Karnataka

Photographer's Corner

SHREENIWAS KANDUKUREE | MAR 2018



Indian Paradise Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*)
Dandeli, Karnataka



Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava* carrying nesting material
By Prasanna Kumar Mamidala